

Final recommendations on the
future electoral arrangements
for Hastings in East Sussex

Report to the Secretary of State for
Transport, Local Government and the Regions

August 2001

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A large map illustrating the proposed ward boundaries for Hastings is inserted inside the back cover of this report.

WHAT IS THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND?

The Local Government Commission for England is an independent body set up by Parliament. Our task is to review and make recommendations to the Government on whether there should be changes to local authorities' electoral arrangements.

Members of the Commission are:

Professor Malcolm Grant (Chairman)
Professor Michael Clarke CBE (Deputy Chairman)
Peter Brokenshire
Kru Desai
Pamela Gordon
Robin Gray
Robert Hughes CBE

Barbara Stephens (Chief Executive)

We are required by law to review the electoral arrangements of every principal local authority in England. Our aim is to ensure that the number of electors represented by each councillor in an area is as nearly as possible the same, taking into account local circumstances. We can recommend changes to ward boundaries, the number of councillors, ward names and the frequency of elections.

This report sets out the Commission's final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Hastings in East Sussex.

SUMMARY

We began a review of Hastings's electoral arrangements on 25 July 2000. We published our draft recommendations for electoral arrangements on 20 February 2001, after which we undertook a nine-week period of consultation.

- **This report summarises the representations we received during consultation on our draft recommendations, and contains our final recommendations to the Secretary of State.**

We found that the existing arrangements provide unequal representation of electors in Hastings:

- **in nine of the 16 wards the number of electors represented by each councillor varies by more than 10 per cent from the average for the borough and three wards vary by more than 20 per cent;**
- **by 2005 this situation is not expected to improve, with the number of electors per councillor forecast to vary by more than 10 per cent from the average in eight wards and by more than 20 per cent in four wards.**

Our main final recommendations for future electoral arrangements (see Tables 1 and 2 and paragraphs 58–59) are that:

- **Hastings Borough Council should have 32 councillors, as at present;**
- **there should be 16 wards, as at present;**
- **the boundaries of all of the existing wards should be modified;**
- **elections should continue to take place by thirds.**

The purpose of these proposals is to ensure that, in future, each borough councillor represents approximately the same number of electors, bearing in mind local circumstances.

- **In 14 of the proposed 16 wards the number of electors per councillor would vary by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average.**
- **This improved level of electoral equality is forecast to continue, with the number of electors per councillor in all wards expected to vary by less than 10 per cent from the average for the borough in 2005.**

All further correspondence on these final recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, who will not make an Order implementing them before 18 September 2001:

**The Secretary of State
Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions
Local Government Sponsorship Division
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU**

Table 1: Final Recommendations: Summary

| | Ward name | Number of councillors | Constituent areas |
|----|---------------------|------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Ashdown | 2 | Ashdown ward (part); Hollington ward (part) |
| 2 | Baird | 2 | Broomgrove ward (part); Elphinstone ward (part); Ore ward (part) |
| 3 | Braybrooke | 2 | Braybrooke ward (part); Elphinstone ward (part); Gensing ward (part); Silverhill ward (part) |
| 4 | Castle | 2 | Braybrooke ward (part); Castle ward (part); Central St Leonards ward (part); Gensing ward (part); Mount Pleasant ward (part); Old Hastings ward (part) |
| 5 | Central St Leonards | 2 | Central St Leonards ward (part); Gensing ward (part); Maze Hill ward (part) |
| 6 | Conquest | 2 | Ashdown ward (part); St Helens ward (part) |
| 7 | Gensing | 2 | Gensing ward (part); Maze Hill ward (part); Silverhill ward (part) |
| 8 | Hollington | 2 | Hollington ward (part); West St Leonards ward (part); Wishing Tree ward (part) |
| 9 | Maze Hill | 2 | Central St Leonards ward (part); Maze Hill ward (part); West St Leonards ward (part) |
| 10 | Old Hastings | 2 | Broomgrove ward (part); Mount Pleasant ward (part); Old Hastings ward (part); Ore ward (part) |
| 11 | Ore | 2 | Broomgrove ward (part); Ore ward (part) |
| 12 | St Helens | 2 | Braybrooke ward (part); Elphinstone ward (part); St Helens ward (part) |
| 13 | Silverhill | 2 | Ashdown ward (part); Maze Hill ward (part); Silverhill ward (part); Wishing Tree ward (part) |
| 14 | Tressell | 2 | Braybrooke ward (part); Broomgrove ward (part); Mount Pleasant ward (part) |
| 15 | West St Leonards | 2 | Maze Hill ward (part); West St Leonards ward (part) |
| 16 | Wishing Tree | 2 | Hollington ward (part); Wishing Tree ward (part) |

Notes: 1 Hastings borough is completely unparished.

2 Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report illustrate all of the proposed wards.

Table 2: Final Recommendations for Hastings

| Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (2000) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2005) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Ashdown | 2 | 3,587 | 1,794 | -6 | 4,242 | 2,121 | 6 |
| 2 Baird | 2 | 3,876 | 1,938 | 1 | 3,897 | 1,949 | -3 |
| 3 Braybrooke | 2 | 3,794 | 1,897 | -1 | 3,849 | 1,925 | -4 |
| 4 Castle | 2 | 4,079 | 2,040 | 7 | 4,147 | 2,074 | 3 |
| 5 Central St Leonards | 2 | 3,967 | 1,984 | 4 | 4,049 | 2,025 | 1 |
| 6 Conquest | 2 | 3,903 | 1,952 | 2 | 3,984 | 1,992 | -1 |
| 7 Gensing | 2 | 4,174 | 2,087 | 9 | 4,310 | 2,155 | 7 |
| 8 Hollington | 2 | 3,890 | 1,945 | 2 | 4,257 | 2,129 | 6 |
| 9 Maze Hill | 2 | 3,894 | 1,947 | 2 | 4,081 | 2,041 | 2 |
| 10 Old Hastings | 2 | 4,271 | 2,136 | 12 | 4,352 | 2,176 | 8 |
| 11 Ore | 2 | 3,833 | 1,917 | 0 | 3,922 | 1,961 | -2 |
| 12 St Helens | 2 | 3,901 | 1,951 | 2 | 4,029 | 2,015 | 0 |
| 13 Silverhill | 2 | 3,629 | 1,815 | -5 | 3,668 | 1,834 | -9 |
| 14 Tressell | 2 | 3,300 | 1,650 | -14 | 3,789 | 1,895 | -6 |
| 15 West St Leonards | 2 | 3,478 | 1,739 | -9 | 3,817 | 1,909 | -5 |
| 16 Wishing Tree | 2 | 3,663 | 1,832 | -4 | 3,889 | 1,945 | -3 |
| Totals | 32 | 61,239 | - | - | 64,282 | - | - |
| Averages | - | - | 1,914 | - | - | 2,009 | - |

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Hastings Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

1 INTRODUCTION

1 This report contains our final recommendations on the electoral arrangements for the borough of Hastings in East Sussex. We have now reviewed the five districts in East Sussex and the unitary authority of Brighton & Hove as part of our programme of periodic electoral reviews (PERs) of all 386 principal local authority areas in England. Our programme started in 1996 and is currently expected to finish in 2004.

2 This was our first review of the electoral arrangements of Hastings. The last review of Hastings was undertaken by our predecessor, the Local Government Boundary Commission (LGBC), which reported to the Secretary of State in October 1977 (Report no. 259). The electoral arrangements of East Sussex County Council were last reviewed in August 1981 (Report no. 417). We intend reviewing the County Council's electoral arrangements in 2002.

3 In undertaking these reviews, we have had regard to:

- the statutory criteria contained in section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992, i.e. the need to:
 - (a) reflect the identities and interests of local communities; and
 - (b) secure effective and convenient local government;
- the *Rules to be Observed in Considering Electoral Arrangements* contained in Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972.

4 Full details of the legislation under which we work are set out in a document entitled *Guidance and Procedural Advice for Local Authorities and Other Interested Parties* (fourth edition published in December 2000). This *Guidance* sets out our approach to the reviews.

5 Our task is to make recommendations to the Secretary of State on the number of councillors who should serve on a council, and the number, boundaries and names of wards.

6 In our *Guidance*, we state that we wish wherever possible to build on schemes which have been prepared locally on the basis of careful and effective consultation. Local interests are normally in a better position to judge what council size and ward configuration are most likely to secure effective and convenient local government in their areas, while also reflecting the identities and interests of local communities.

7 The broad objective of PERs is to achieve, so far as possible, equal representation across the borough as a whole. Schemes which would result in, or retain, an electoral imbalance of over 10 per cent in any ward will have to be fully justified. Any imbalances of 20 per cent or more should only arise in the most exceptional circumstances, and will require the strongest justification.

8 We are not prescriptive on council size. We start from the assumption that the size of the existing council already secures effective and convenient local government, but we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be so. However, we have found it necessary to safeguard against upward drift in the number of councillors, and we believe that any proposal for an increase in council size will need to be fully justified. In particular, we do not accept that an increase in electorate should

automatically result in an increase in the number of councillors, nor that changes should be made to the size of a council simply to make it more consistent with the size of other similar councils.

9 In July 1998, the Government published a White Paper called *Modern Local Government – In Touch with the People*, which set out legislative proposals for local authority electoral arrangements. In two-tier areas, it proposed introducing a pattern in which both the district and county councils would hold elections every two years, i.e. in year one, half of the district council would be elected, in year two, half the county council would be elected, and so on. The Government stated that local accountability would be maximised where every elector has an opportunity to vote every year, thereby pointing to a pattern of two-member wards (and divisions) in two-tier areas. However, it stated that there was no intention to move towards very large electoral areas in sparsely populated rural areas, and that single-member wards (and electoral divisions) would continue in many authorities. The proposals were put forward in the Local Government Act 2000 which, among other matters, provides that the Secretary of State may make Orders to change authorities' electoral cycles. However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Orders under the 2000 Act, we will continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in the two-tier district areas, and our current *Guidance*.

10 This review was in four stages. Stage One began on 25 July 2000, when we wrote to Hastings Borough Council inviting proposals for future electoral arrangements. We also notified East Sussex County Council, East Sussex Police Authority, the local authority associations, the Members of Parliament with constituencies in the borough, the Members of the European Parliament for the Southern region, and the headquarters of the main political parties. We placed a notice in the local press, issued a press release and invited the Borough Council to publicise the review further. The closing date for receipt of representations, the end of Stage One, was 16 October 2000. At Stage Two we considered all the representations received during Stage One and prepared our draft recommendations.

11 Stage Three began on 20 February 2001 with the publication of our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Hastings in East Sussex*, and ended on 23 April 2001. During this period we sought comments from the public and any other interested parties on our preliminary conclusions. Finally, during Stage Four we reconsidered our draft recommendations in the light of the Stage Three consultation and now publish our final recommendations.

2 CURRENT ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS

12 The borough of Hastings is bound on three sides by Rother district, its only neighbouring local authority, and to the south by the English Channel. The borough is fairly densely populated and urban in character and has a population of approximately 84,500, covering an area of 2,972 hectares. The borough is divided into two distinct communities: Hastings and St Leonards. There are no civil parishes in the borough. Since the last electoral review there has been an increase in the electorate in Hastings borough, with around 5 per cent more electors than two decades ago as a result of new housing developments. The most notable increases have been in Ashdown and West St Leonards wards.

13 To compare levels of electoral inequality between wards, we calculated, in percentage terms, the extent to which the number of electors per councillor in each ward (the councillor:elector ratio) varies from the borough average. In the text which follows, this calculation may also be described using the shorthand term 'electoral variance'.

14 The electorate of the borough is currently 61,239 (February 2000). The Council presently has 32 members who are elected from 16 wards, all of which are each represented by two councillors. The Council is elected by thirds.

15 At present, each councillor represents an average of 1,914 electors, which the Borough Council forecasts will increase to 2,009 by the year 2005 if the present number of councillors is maintained. However, due to demographic and other changes over the past two decades, the number of electors per councillor in nine of the 16 wards varies by more than 10 per cent from the borough average and in three wards by more than 20 per cent. The worst imbalance is in Ashdown ward where each of the two councillors represents 41 per cent more electors than the borough average. The degree of imbalance across the borough is also illustrated by the fact that each of the two councillors for Ashdown ward represent more than twice as many electors as the councillors for Castle ward.

Map 1: Existing Wards in Hastings

Table 3: Existing Electoral Arrangements

| Ward name | Number of councillors | Electorate (2000) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % | Electorate (2005) | Number of electors per councillor | Variance from average % |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1 Ashdown | 2 | 5,390 | 2,695 | 41 | 5,464 | 2,732 | 43 |
| 2 Braybrooke | 2 | 3,713 | 1,857 | -3 | 3,751 | 1,876 | -2 |
| 3 Broomgrove | 2 | 3,341 | 1,671 | -13 | 3,845 | 1,923 | 0 |
| 4 Castle | 2 | 2,422 | 1,211 | -37 | 2,476 | 1,238 | -35 |
| 5 Central St Leonards | 2 | 3,154 | 1,577 | -18 | 3,237 | 1,619 | -15 |
| 6 Elphinstone | 2 | 3,554 | 1,777 | -7 | 3,650 | 1,825 | -5 |
| 7 Gensing | 2 | 3,504 | 1,752 | -8 | 3,650 | 1,825 | -5 |
| 8 Hollington | 2 | 4,463 | 2,232 | 17 | 5,396 | 2,698 | 41 |
| 9 Maze Hill | 2 | 3,532 | 1,766 | -8 | 3,738 | 1,869 | -2 |
| 10 Mount Pleasant | 2 | 3,790 | 1,895 | -1 | 3,811 | 1,906 | 0 |
| 11 Old Hastings | 2 | 3,086 | 1,543 | -19 | 3,155 | 1,578 | -18 |
| 12 Ore | 2 | 3,839 | 1,920 | 0 | 3,910 | 1,955 | 2 |
| 13 St Helens | 2 | 4,241 | 2,121 | 11 | 4,283 | 2,142 | 12 |
| 14 Silverhill | 2 | 3,722 | 1,861 | -3 | 3,825 | 1,913 | 0 |
| 15 West St Leonards | 2 | 5,127 | 2,564 | 34 | 5,556 | 2,778 | 45 |
| 16 Wishing Tree | 2 | 4,361 | 2,181 | 14 | 4,535 | 2,268 | 18 |
| Totals | 32 | 61,239 | - | - | 64,282 | - | - |
| Averages | - | - | 1,914 | - | - | 2,009 | - |

Source: Electorate figures are based on information provided by Hastings Borough Council.

Note: The 'variance from average' column shows by how far, in percentage terms, the number of electors per councillor varies from the average for the borough. The minus symbol (-) denotes a lower than average number of electors. For example, in 2000, electors in Castle ward were relatively over-represented by 37 per cent, while electors in Ashdown ward were significantly under-represented by 41 per cent. Figures have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

3 DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

16 During Stage One we received three representations, including a borough-wide scheme from Hastings Borough Council, and representations from the Conservative Group on the Council and a local resident. In the light of these representations and evidence available to us, we reached preliminary conclusions which were set out in our report, *Draft recommendations on the future electoral arrangements for Hastings in East Sussex*.

17 Although our draft recommendations were based on the Borough Council's proposals, which achieved some improvement in electoral equality and provided a pattern of two-member wards throughout the borough, we moved away from the Borough Council's scheme in 14 of the 16 wards to varying degrees. We recommended that:

- Hastings Borough Council should be served by 32 councillors, representing 16 wards, as at present;
- the boundaries of all 16 existing wards should be modified.

Draft Recommendation

Hastings Borough Council should comprise 32 councillors, serving 16 wards. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

18 Our proposals would have resulted in significant improvements in electoral equality, with the number of electors per councillor in 14 of the 16 wards varying by no more than 10 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality was forecast to improve further, with no ward having a variance of more than 10 per cent from the average in 2005.

4 RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

19 During the consultation on our draft recommendations report, we received three representations. A list of all respondents is available from us on request. All representations may be inspected at our offices and those of Hastings Borough Council.

Hastings Borough Council

20 Hastings Borough Council expressed support for the majority of the draft recommendations, including the retention of the current numbers of members and wards. However, it proposed that there should be boundary modifications to the wards of Maze Hill, Gensing and Baird wards. Finally the Borough Council also urged the Commission to support its request for the Secretary of State to make an order changing its electoral arrangements to elections by halves.

Other Representations

21 The 1066 Housing Association generally supported the draft recommendations, however, it was concerned about how the new warding arrangements might affect the 'government assistance to the town'. One local resident requested that Conquest ward be renamed either Parkstone or Hillside.

5 ANALYSIS AND FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

22 As described earlier, our prime objective in considering the most appropriate electoral arrangements for Hastings is, so far as reasonably practicable and consistent with the statutory criteria, to achieve electoral equality. In doing so we have regard to section 13(5) of the Local Government Act 1992 – the need to secure effective and convenient local government, and reflect the identities and interests of local communities – and Schedule 11 to the Local Government Act 1972, which refers to the number of electors per councillor being “as nearly as may be, the same in every ward of the district or borough”.

23 In relation to Schedule 11, our recommendations are not intended to be based solely on existing electorate figures, but also on estimated changes in the number and distribution of local government electors likely to take place over the next five years. We also must have regard to the desirability of fixing identifiable boundaries and to maintaining local ties.

24 It is therefore impractical to design an electoral scheme which results in exactly the same number of electors per councillor in every ward of an authority. There must be a degree of flexibility. However, our approach, in the context of the statutory criteria, is that such flexibility must be kept to a minimum.

25 Our *Guidance* states that we accept that the achievement of absolute electoral equality for the authority as a whole is likely to be unattainable. However, we consider that, if electoral imbalances are to be minimised, the aim of electoral equality should be the starting point in any review. We therefore strongly recommend that, in formulating electoral schemes, local authorities and other interested parties should make electoral equality their starting point, and then make adjustments to reflect relevant factors such as community identity and interests. Five-year forecasts of changes in electorate must also be considered and we would aim to recommend a scheme which provides improved electoral equality over this five-year period.

Electorate Forecasts

26 Since 1977 there has been a 5 per cent increase in the electorate of Hastings borough. At Stage One the Borough Council submitted electorate forecasts for the year 2005, projecting an increase in the electorate of approximately 5 per cent from 61,239 to 64,282 over the five-year period from 2000 to 2005. It expects most of the growth to be in Hollington ward, although some is also expected in Broomgrove ward. In order to prepare these forecasts, the Council estimated rates and locations of housing development with regard to structure and local plans, the expected rate of building over the five-year period and assumed occupancy rates. We accept that this is an inexact science and, having considered the forecast electorates, we stated in our draft recommendations report that we were satisfied that they represented the best estimates that could reasonably be made at the time.

27 We received no comments on the Council’s electorate forecasts during Stage Three, and remain satisfied that they are the best estimates which can reasonably be made at this time.

Council Size

28 As already explained, we start by assuming that the current council size facilitates effective and convenient local government, although we are willing to look carefully at arguments why this might not be the case.

29 In our draft recommendations report we adopted the Council's proposal to retain the current council size of 32 members. The Conservative Group on the Council proposed reducing the council size to 30 members, however, it provided no evidence of consultation on this proposed council size or the impact that it would have on the council's internal management.

30 During Stage Three we received no further proposals for any change to the current number of members. We therefore endorse our draft recommendation for a council size of 32 as final.

Electoral Arrangements

31 During Stage One we received only one borough-wide scheme, from the Borough Council. However, we were unable to adopt the scheme due to the poor levels of electoral equality that it would have provided. We therefore developed our own scheme for much of the borough, based on the Borough Council's general configuration of wards.

32 We have reviewed our draft recommendations in the light of further evidence and the representations received during Stage Three. For borough warding purposes, the following areas, based on existing wards, are considered in turn:

- (a) Central St Leonards, Gensing, Maze Hill and West St Leonards wards;
- (b) Hollington, Silverhill and Wishing Tree wards;
- (c) Ashdown, Braybrooke, Broomgrove, Elphinstone and St Helens wards;
- (d) Castle, Mount Pleasant, Old Hastings and Ore wards;

33 Details of our final recommendations are set out in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and on the large map inserted at the back of this report.

Central St Leonards, Gensing, Maze Hill and West St Leonards wards

34 These wards lie in the south west part of the borough and are each represented by two councillors. Central St Leonards, Gensing, Maze Hill and West St Leonards wards have an electoral variance of 18 per cent, 8 per cent, 8 per cent and 34 per cent respectively (15 per cent, 5 per cent, 2 per cent and 45 per cent in 2005).

35 At Stage One the Council proposed a modified Central St Leonards ward that would have an electoral variance of 11 per cent below the borough average (14 per cent below in 2005), whilst Maze Hill ward would have an electoral variance of 19 per cent above the borough average (18 per cent above in 2005). Given the relatively poor levels of electoral equality we investigated alternative options for this area. We recommended the inclusion of the area generally area south of West Hill Road, the sea front, in Central St Leonards ward.

36 Given the general levels of over-representation in the Council's Gensing ward we looked at alternative ward boundaries to reflect the communities in the area and proposed including the area generally south of Shornden Wood in Gensing ward, resulting in the whole of the Bohemia community being in one ward. We also recommended modifications to improve levels of electoral equality in West St Leonards ward, including that part of the current Maze Hill ward west of Caves Road in the modified West St Leonards ward. This area, east of the railway line, has access to the remainder of West St Leonards ward and we considered that the inclusion of this area would not be detrimental to community identities.

37 Under our draft recommendations, the number of electors per councillor in Central St Leonards ward would be 4 per cent above the borough average (1 per cent in 2005), 9 per cent above the borough average in Gensing ward (7 per cent above in 2005), 2 per cent above the borough average both initially and in 2005 in Maze Hill ward and 9 per cent below the borough average in West St Leonards ward (5 per cent below in 2005).

38 At Stage Three we received two representations concerning this area. The Borough Council generally supported our draft recommendations subject to the following amendments. It proposed that the area from Pevensey Road, along Archery Road and south to the seafront, be moved from Maze Hill ward into Central St Leonards ward. The Council argued that the elected members did not support our recommendation to include the seafront properties in Central St. Leonards. This amendment would result in the number of electors per councillor in Maze Hill ward and Central St Leonards ward being 12 per cent and 14 per cent below the district average in 2005 respectively. The Council restated its original proposals for Gensing ward, that the museum within it should be relocated back to Castle ward. This amendment would not involve any electors. The 1066 Housing Association expressed concern at the effect the proposed wards could potentially have on neighbourhood renewal, the Indices of Local Deprivation and the future attraction of Government assistance to the town.

39 Having carefully considered the representations received, we have not been convinced by the Council's argumentation to amend Maze Hill ward, particularly as there was no evidence to justify the increased electoral inequality. We remain convinced that the area along the seafront has similar community characteristics and that placing much of this area in a single ward is an accurate reflection of community identities and interests. We do, however, propose adopting the Council's proposals for Castle ward as this would not adversely effect electoral equality. With regard to the concerns of the 1066 Housing Association, these are not issues which we are able to take into account as part of our review of electoral arrangements.

40 We have therefore decided to endorse the majority of our draft recommendations for Central St Leonards, Gensing, Maze Hill and West St Leonards wards as final, with a minor boundary modification between the wards of Gensing and Castle, as described above.

41 Under our final recommendations the levels of electoral equality would be the same as under our draft recommendations. These proposals are illustrated and named in Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Hollington, Silverhill and Wishing Tree wards

42 These three wards lie in the centre and west of the borough and are each represented by two councillors. Hollington, Silverhill and Wishing Tree wards have an electoral variance of 17 per cent, 3 per cent and 14 per cent respectively (41 per cent, equal to the borough average and 18 per cent in 2005).

43 During Stage One the Borough Council proposed modifications to all three wards, however, again these would have resulted in high levels of electoral imbalance for this area. In order to achieve an improvement in the electoral equality of both Hollington ward and Ashdown ward, we proposed reverting to the existing boundary between the wards for most of its length, i.e. the centre of Battle Road, which we considered provided a clear boundary. We proposed, however, that the area around Augustus Way be included in a modified Ashdown ward. We further proposed using Battle Road and

Sedlescombe Road South as the boundary between the wards of Silverhill and Wishing Tree. Finally within this area, we proposed that the whole of the Bohemia community, the area generally east of London Road and south of Shornden Wood, be included in a modified Gensing ward.

44 Under these recommendations the elector per councillor ratio would be 2 per cent above the borough average in Hollington ward (6 per cent above in 2005), 5 per cent below the borough average in Silverhill ward (9 per cent below in 2005), and 4 per cent below the borough average in Wishing Tree ward (3 per cent below in 2005).

45 During Stage Three we received no further representations relating to this area. In the light of this, and the previous consideration we have given to this area we propose that our draft recommendations be endorsed as final. The electoral variances would be the same as under our draft recommendations. These proposals are illustrated and named in Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Ashdown, Braybrooke, Broomgrove, Elphinstone and St Helens wards

46 These five wards lie in the central-northern part of the borough and are each represented by two councillors. Ashdown, Braybrooke, Broomgrove, Elphinstone and St Helens wards have an electoral variance of 41 per cent, 3 per cent, 13 per cent, 7 per cent and 11 per cent respectively (43 per cent, 2 per cent, equal to the borough average, 5 per cent and 12 per cent in 2005).

47 During Stage One the Borough Council proposed dividing Ashdown ward. That part of Ashdown ward generally west of Silverhill Avenue and that part of Hollington ward to the north-west of Queensway would be included in a modified Ashdown ward. The remainder of Ashdown ward, plus that part of the current St Helens ward west of St Helens Wood would then form part of the proposed Conquest ward. The remainder of St Helens ward, less the area generally south of Freshwater Avenue, together with that part of Elphinstone ward generally west of Elphinstone Road, would comprise a modified St Helens ward. The Council further proposed a new Baird ward, comprising that part of Elphinstone ward generally east of Elphinstone Road and that part of Broomgrove ward to the west of the fence marking the line of the railway. Finally in this area, the Council proposed a modified Braybrooke ward, comprising that part of St Helens ward generally south of Freshwater Avenue, that part of Elphinstone ward generally south of Elphinstone Avenue, that part of Braybrooke ward to the west of the railway line, that part of Gensing ward to the north-east of Briscoe's Walk and that part of Silverhill ward south of Upper Park.

48 Due to the electoral imbalances that would persist under the Council's proposals we recommended using the centre of Battle Road as the boundary between Ashdown and Hollington wards, additionally including the area around Augustus Way in Ashdown ward. We considered that this would provide a clear and identifiable boundary and would improve electoral equality in both wards.

49 We also proposed two further minor modifications to improve electoral equality in St Helens ward. In the north-west of the ward, we proposed that all of St Helens Road south of Ghyllside Drive be retained in St Helens ward. In the south-east of the ward, we proposed that the area to the west of, and including, St Helens Park Road should also continue to form part of St Helens ward.

50 At Stage Three the Borough Council proposed that the boundary of Baird ward be aligned to Malvern Way, thereby including a small number of houses currently in Ore ward. This amendment would have no significant effect on the electoral variances for Baird ward or Ore ward. We received one response from a local resident proposing that the new Conquest ward should be renamed either

Parkstone or Hillside. However no evidence of more widespread support for these alternative ward names was produced. We noted the need for minor modifications to St Helens ward boundary with Braybrooke ward. In order to tie this boundary more firmly to ground detail, we recommend that it be redrawn up to the junction between Fearon Road and St Helens Park Road, thereby including one residential property on Fearon Road. This amendment would not alter the levels of electoral equality achieved. We received no further responses for this area. In the light of this we propose that our draft recommendations for this area be endorsed as final, subject to the minor amendments detailed above.

51 Under our final recommendations, the number of electors per councillor would be 6 per cent below the borough average in Ashdown ward (6 per cent above in 2005), 1 per cent above the borough average in Baird ward (3 per cent below in 2005), 1 per cent below the borough average in Braybrooke ward (4 per cent below in 2005), 2 per cent above the borough average in Conquest ward (1 per cent below in 2005) and 2 per cent above the borough average in St Helens ward (equal to the average in 2005). These proposals are illustrated and named in Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Castle, Mount Pleasant, Old Hastings and Ore wards

52 These four wards lie in the east of the borough, to the east of the railway line. They are each represented by two councillors. Castle, Mount Pleasant, Old Hastings and Ore wards have electoral variances of 37 per cent, 1 per cent, 19 per cent and equal to the borough average respectively (35 per cent, equal to the borough average, 18 per cent and 2 per cent in 2005).

53 At Stage One the Borough Council proposed amendments to all four wards. It proposed minor modifications to Ore ward, uniting whole roads in a single borough ward. It proposed creating a new Tressell ward, comprising that part of Broomgrove ward to the east of the fence marking the railway line and that part of Mount Pleasant ward generally west of Old London Road. It proposed that the remainder of Mount Pleasant ward be included in a ward with the majority of Old Hastings ward, less the area west of Collier Road. This area of Old Hastings ward, Braybrooke ward east of the railway line and Castle ward would then form a modified Castle ward.

54 Given that these modifications resulted in considerable improvements to electoral equality, and had been achieved after local consultation, we adopted the Council's warding pattern for the area as part of our draft recommendations.

55 During Stage Three the Borough Council requested that the museum should be relocated from Gensing ward into Castle ward. We received no further responses with regard to this area subject to this one amendment, which would have no affect on any electors. We therefore recommend that the draft recommendations for this area be endorsed as final. Under these recommendations the number of electors per councillor ratio will be 7 per cent above the borough average in Castle ward (3 per cent above in 2005), 12 per cent above the borough average in Old Hastings ward (8 per cent above in 2005), 14 per cent below the borough average in Tressell ward (6 per cent below in 2005) and equal to the borough average in Ore ward (2 per cent below in 2005). These proposals are illustrated and named in Map 2 and the large map at the back of the report.

Electoral Cycle

56 At Stage One we received one proposal in relation to the electoral cycle of the borough from the Borough Council itself. It stated that it supported a system of elections by halves. It considered that there was a view amongst local electors that they were "missing out in the electoral process due to the

fact that not all wards vote each time there is an election”. It also repeated this assertion in its Stage Three submission.

57 However, until such time as the Secretary of State makes any Order under the Local Government Act 2000, we continue to operate on the basis of existing legislation, which provides for elections by thirds or whole-council elections in two-tier areas. Statutorily, we have no power to recommend a change to biennial elections. We therefore propose no change to the Council's present system of elections by thirds.

Conclusions

58 Having carefully considered all the representations and evidence received in response to our consultation report, we have decided substantially to endorse our draft recommendations, subject to the following amendments:

- in Baird ward we recommend adopting the Council's proposed amendment to the boundary with Ore ward;
- we recommend adopting the Council's proposed amendment for the boundary between Castle ward and Gensing ward;
- we recommend the redrawing of boundary between St Helens ward and Braybrooke ward in order to tie it more clearly to ground detail.

59 We conclude that, in Hastings:

- there should be no change to the current council size of 32;
- there should be 16 wards, as at present;
- the boundaries of all 16 existing wards should be modified;
- the Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

60 Table 4 shows the impact of our final recommendations on electoral equality, comparing them with the current arrangements, based on 2000 and 2005 electorate figures.

Table 4: Comparison of Current and Recommended Electoral Arrangements

| | 2000 electorate | | 2005 forecast electorate | |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| | Current arrangements | Final recommendations | Current arrangements | Final recommendations |
| Number of councillors | 32 | 32 | 32 | 32 |
| Number of wards | 16 | 16 | 16 | 16 |
| Average number of electors per councillor | 1,914 | 1,914 | 2,009 | 2,009 |
| Number of wards with a variance more than 10 per cent from the average | 9 | 2 | 8 | 0 |
| Number of wards with a variance more than 20 per cent from the average | 3 | 0 | 4 | 0 |

61 As Table 4 shows, our recommendations would result in a reduction in the number of wards with an electoral variance of more than 10 per cent from nine to two, with no ward having a variance by more than 20 per cent from the borough average. This level of electoral equality would improve further in 2005, with all wards having a variance of less than 10 per cent from the average. We conclude that our recommendations would best meet the need for electoral equality, having regard to the statutory criteria.

Final Recommendation

Hastings Borough Council should comprise 32 councillors serving 16 wards, as detailed and named in Tables 1 and 2, and illustrated on Map 2 and the large map inside the back cover. The Council should continue to hold elections by thirds.

Map 2: Final Recommendations for Hastings

6 WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

62 Having completed our review of electoral arrangements in Hastings and submitted our final recommendations to the Secretary of State, we have fulfilled our statutory obligation under the Local Government Act 1992.

63 It is now up to the Secretary of State to decide whether to endorse our recommendations, with or without modification, and to implement them by means of an Order. Such an Order will not be made before 18 September 2001.

64 All further correspondence concerning our recommendations and the matters discussed in this report should be addressed to:

The Secretary of State
Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions
Local Government Sponsorship Division
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU